

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) brought the urgency expressed by Western New Yorkers to the House floor as she spoke on the Aviation Safety and Investment Act of 2010, legislation crafted based on the lessons learned from the crash of Continental Connector Flight 3407.

“I can think of no better way to mark the lessons we have learned as a nation about flight safety than by honoring the people who died on that cold and snowy night,” said Slaughter. “Yesterday morning, right here in the Capitol, I was privileged to meet with some of the victims' families. It is always a sobering experience to sit down with those brave souls and their efforts to fight for safer travel for all of us is a testament to their commitment and passion.”

As Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, she presided over the Rules Committee which yesterday considered the important safety legislation.

“Shouldn't a pilot's entire flying history be available to their employer? I certainly think so. I know it would make me feel better about getting on a plane,” she asked.

Yesterday Slaughter joined other Western New York lawmakers who spoke with FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt. They urged him to quickly implement the recommendations issued by the National Transportation Safety Board in February.

Video of her floor statement is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H89smKU3rZ8>

A transcript of her remarks is included below.

Mr. Speaker I stand here just a day after having been reminded again of the pain of many of my friends and constituents of the tragic February 12 2009 crash of the Colgan Air Flight 3407 and the grief that it has caused to the people of our area.

Yesterday morning, here, I was privileged to meet with some of the victims' families. It is always a sobering experience to sit down with those brave souls and their efforts to fight for safer travel for the rest of us and their great fight is a testament to their commitment and passion.

I can think of no better way to mark the lessons we have learned as a nation about flight safety than by honoring the people who died on that cold and snowy night.

The meeting I had yesterday morning centered on safety proposals and a discussion of how this legislation will eventually be implemented. We also talked with the Federal Aviation Administration about why it has to take so long before simple, common sense changes can be made to the laws that govern how many hours a pilot flies, how are they trained, who is responsible for ensuring that their flight records are not locked away in some box where nobody can assess their skills.

After last year's crash I could hardly believe it when we learned that the pilot of Flight 3407 had failed five different tests but yet his employer only knew about two of those failures. Shouldn't a pilot's entire flying record be available to their employer? I think so and I know it would make me feel better about getting on a plane.

As you know, I have been fighting for a handful of specific and simple changes to current law.

I believe the regional air pilots must be paid better; better compensation will help make sure we get the best people in the cockpit. I was stunned to learn that the first officer of Flight 3407 was paid \$16,000 a year. That's less than you would earn at a convenience store. Is that what we pay people that we trust with our lives?

I am also worried about fatigue; a tired pilot is not at his best and that's not acceptable. My proposal would call for a study by the National Academy of Science on the topic but would go

further by tasking the FAA to rewrite many of the standards for pilots.

I'd like to see pilot's flight records available so that everybody knows about their past flying experiences. Again, my plan would mandate that the General Accounting Office would review this with an eye toward greater transparency.

I'd like to see carrier maintenance of their aircraft, and changes made to the cozy relationship that the FAA has had with airlines and some way to put real teeth into the recommendations that grew out of the horrific hearings last spring by the National Transportation Safety Board.

It's been 21 years, Mr. Speaker, since we have revised some of the standards for aircraft rescue and fire fighting standards. We're well overdo to update our expectations for all pilots, who for the most part are well qualified, dedicated and well trained professionals.

Of course, the legislation we're debating today is about much more. With this bill, we have essentially combined our pilot safety bill and the FAA authorization in one package. It is my hope the Senate will do the right thing and allow us to go to conference where we can quickly and appropriately settle upon a compromise that allows us to turn this conversation into tangible improvements.

Besides the safety programs this bill provides essential increases in aviation funding and safety improvements and invests in the Airport Improvement Program to help overcome congestion and delays.

The amendment we are considering today consists of the texts of two bills that already have passed the House: H.R. 915, the "FAA Reauthorization Act of 2009", and H.R. 3371, the "Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act of 2009".

I urge my colleagues to come together with me to approve this rule and let us move quickly to pass this amendment and send it to the senate.

I reserve the balance of my time.